

**Testimony of Elease Wright
Nominee to the Board of Regents for Higher Education
February 3, 2015**

Good afternoon Senator Duff, Representative Janowski, Senator Kane, Representative Buck-Taylor and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. My name is Elease Wright and it is an honor to be appointed by Governor Malloy to the Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you and speak about my enthusiasm about serving on the Board of Regents.

I grew up in New York and came to CT over 40 years ago to attend college. I met my husband in college; raised our children here; and developed life long friendships in CT. I have lived in Hartford for over 35 years.

My family has always valued education – and that value was ingrained in us from my grandparents and my parents; and my husband and I have passed that value on to our children. And we will do the same with our grandchildren. Education exposes us to different perspectives, challenges our thinking and builds our knowledge. In my family, what we discussed in the classroom was often the basis of dynamic, engaging and thought provoking family discussions. Education, therefore, was a conduit for our development. I'm proud of our children and how they have taken advantage of their education. And one of my children even chose education as a profession.

My children attended college outside of Connecticut but both have returned to CT. In fact, our home is centrally located between my son and daughter's homes (within a mile). I'm a grandmother of two – we have a 2-year-old grandson and a newborn granddaughter; and my mother also joined us in Connecticut twelve years ago.

I began my career with the state of CT and worked for Aetna for 31 years. I retired from Aetna two years ago having served as the Chief Human Resources Officer for 15 years supporting six CEOs. For most of my career I have been focused on identifying, recruiting, developing and retaining talent; and managing transitions, culture change and workforce planning. Additionally, community service has been a critical part of my career. Melding my professional work with my volunteer work has made me a better employee and serving organizations that supported the growth, development and health of young people served my company well. It's critical to have healthy, well-educated, competent and schooled individuals who are viable candidates for the available jobs in Connecticut.

While I have a Bachelors of Science degree in Education, I have never taught outside of being a guest lecturer at a university. However, that persistent family value for education has kept me involved with education for many years. I have volunteered in organizations whose focus have been on women and children, healthcare and education; served on the Hartford Board of Education, Greater Hartford YWCA and

Connecticut Children's Medical Center. For several years I also served on a board that represented a partnership between corporations and academia. Its purpose was to connect corporate leaders, faculty and students to discuss and address HR practices, business issues, developmental programs and research projects. Serving as a guest lecturer was one of the most rewarding aspects of my role on that board.

It's a privilege to serve on the Board of Regents with an emphasis on student achievement and learning. The CSCU institutions provide affordable and accessible education and an innovative curriculum that is preparing our students for a workplace that continues to evolve. Over 80% of the students who attend one of the 17 CT State College and University institutions remain in CT and therefore represent a feeder group for the CT workforce. Therefore an educated Connecticut population contributes to the economic health of our state.

While I am no longer working in the private sector, I want to continue to be a part of helping to build the Connecticut workforce. Given my background and experience, and as a member of the CT Board of Regents for Higher Education, I believe I can make a difference in helping to build the workforce.

I've been so impressed with the dedication and commitment of members of the Board of Regents with whom I've interacted. The group represents varying backgrounds and experiences that complement one another. The students are the primary focus of the regents and I am excited about the potential of being a part of the Board and partnering with the administration and the faculty to increase the number of students completing college and having rewarding academic experiences. If the Regents are successful in our goals and objectives the payoff is remarkable and Connecticut will reap the benefits for years to come.

Thank you again to the Executive and Legislative Nomination Committee Members for this opportunity to speak to you.